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ABSTRACT

This book explores parental participation in the public schools as an opportunity for personal growth and empowerment and as a source of support for educational goals and needed resources. The first chapter explores developmental, psychological, and sociological theories that deal with human potential and how this is related to participation, especially for African Americans. The meaning of competence for African Americans is explored in the context of a legacy of racism and second class citizenship. The complexity and promise of participation are considered in Chapter 2. Also reviewed are the expectations of schools regarding parent participation and the effects of social change on attitudes toward participation. Chapter 3 discusses the relevance of the construct of alienation and its dimensions for African Americans. The influence of sociocultural factors is explored, and a parent-school activity index is presented to explore the belief that a sense of alienation was reduced among mothers who actively participated in their children's schools. Chapter 4 describes the process of developing this index. In Chapter 5, an evaluation of parents-as-consumers undertaken in a particular urban school in New Haven (Connecticut) is described, focusing on the selection and training of 10 parent participants, and their contribution to developing and using the questionnaire. In 1987, the study of participation and alienation was replicated in Milwaukee (Wisconsin), and these results are considered in Chapter 6, which also explores the influence of educational status and other demographic variables on the relationship between participation and a mother's sense of alienation. Chapter 7 highlights the sense of personal power that comes with participation, noting the implications for strengthening African American families and all of society. Appendices present the alienation response items and a discussion of statistical methodology (with nine tables). (Contains 5 figures, 2 tables, and 166 references.) (SLD)

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